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Posh Protest [Metro]

Posted September 24th, 2007 by brandworkers in [Wild Edibles](#) [Focus on the Food Chain](#) [Legal Wage and Hour](#)

Food workers rally at Pastis

by amy zimmer / metro new york

SEP 18, 2007

MEATPACKING DISTRICT. The workers who filed a class action lawsuit yesterday against Wild Edibles, a high-end seafood retail and wholesale company, didn't hold their press conference at the company's Long Island City warehouse or one of its three retail locations. Instead, they stood in front of Pastis — Keith McNally's fashionable French restaurant.

Pastis, the workers say, is one of Wild Edibles' big customers. They allege Wild Edibles systematically denied overtime pay and, when workers tried to assert their rights, they faced retaliation.

Pedro Hernandez, who cleans and weighs fish and oversees oysters, has worked at the warehouse for nearly a year and earns \$450 a week for the 56 hours he puts in.

"They make us work a lot, at least three hours above the eight-hour day," Hernandez said through a translator. "We were told we would get a raise after three months, but that never happened."

Brandworkers International, a new nonprofit workers' rights group, along with Industrial Workers of the World IU460-640, organized yesterday's rally to raise awareness for their campaign to improve conditions for the low-wage jobs held mainly by immigrant workers at warehouses in Brooklyn and Queens.

Workers at 10 city food warehouses have joined the IWW. Four from Wild Edibles who tried to unionize with IU460-640 were fired, workers alleged.

Representatives from Wild Edibles and Pastis declined comment.

Daniel Gross, co-founder of Brandworkers, hoped passers-by got the message.

"Focus on the food chain," he said. "Consider what's on your plate. One step before that tuna hits it, workers at Wild Edibles and elsewhere are working in shameful and deplorable conditions."

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